

Earl of March was still the rightful heir, so that the hostility of the Earl and Duke was accentuated by the thought of future possibilities of which no one liked to talk above his breath. It was the fear that John of Gaunt might become King of England that made the timid among his enemies afraid to incense him, and the bold ten times more eager to cripple a power that might some day attempt to seize the throne.

These rumours made the Black Prince the most anxious of all to disarm the man who might hinder his son's succession. He had, indeed, every motive for hostility to the Duke. On the bed of sickness where he had been stretched since his return from France in 1370, his mental sufferings must have been as acute as his physical. Accustomed to lead his countrymen to victory, he lay there helpless, and heard month after month how our armies were allowed to waste away, how our fortresses were lost—sold, men said—by the Duke and his subordinates. Stories of their corruption and extortion at home reached him daily. He knew how they led his father as they wished, and degraded that foolish and sensual old man in the eyes of the nation. One week of health, and he could have resumed his old ascendancy over the King and the government of the land ; but he was doomed to lie still and pine away. Last of all, there was this whisper of a conspiracy against his child's succession. All his feelings as a patriot, as a son, as a father, combined to produce an intense feeling of hatred against John of Gaunt. When the Good Parliament met, he was unable to take his seat in the House of Lords, but from his sick bed at Kennington Palace, near Lambeth, he could exert influence over the political crisis. He was still the heir-apparent; he might still, if only for a short while, outlive his father ; he was still the greatest general of the age; he was still the darling of the nation. The friendly feeling he expressed towards the action of the Commons in the Good Parliament was a strong inducement to John of Gaunt to bow to the storm.

The Bishops were always an important element in the House of Lords, the more so as their action there was consistently directed towards definite objects. One of these was to keep all that the Church had got, and to get as much more